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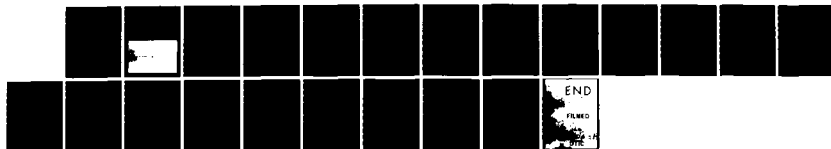
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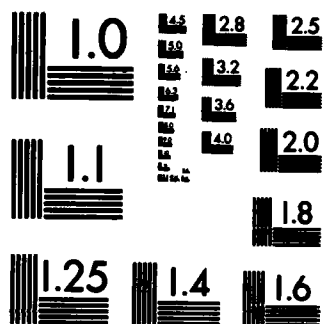
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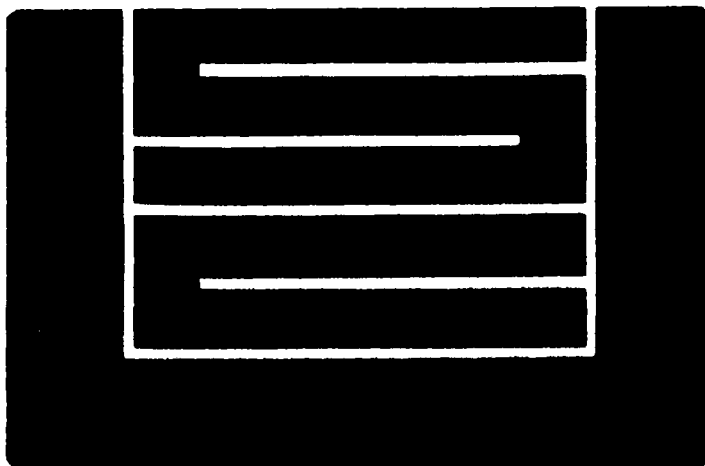
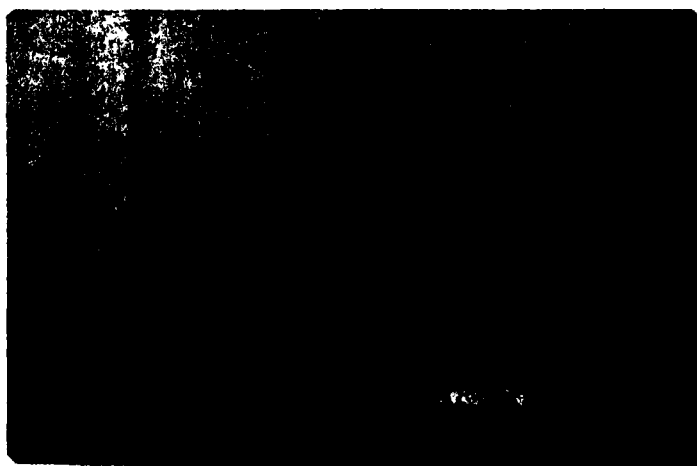
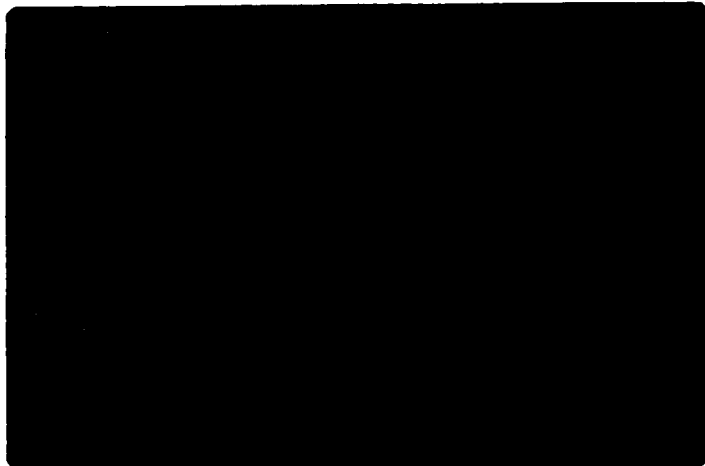
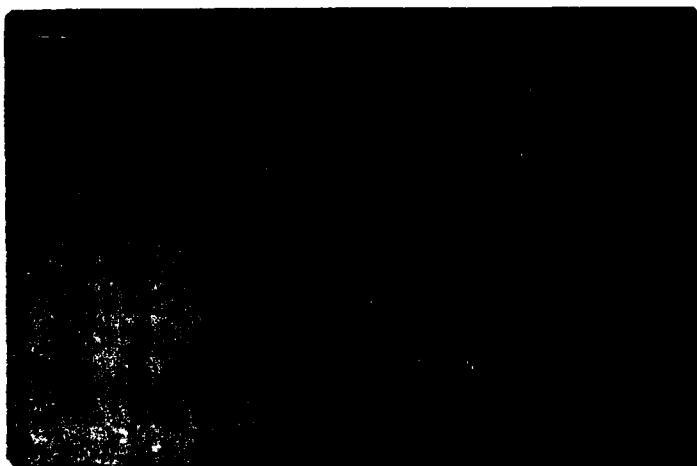
ON DISCRETE FAILURE MODELS*

by

W. J. Padgett and John D. Spurrier

University of South Carolina
Statistics Technical Report No. 97
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ON DISCRETE FAILURE MODELS

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Key Words - Discrete hazard functions; Increasing failure rate;
Decreasing failure rate; Discrete life data; Maximum likelihood estimation.

Summary & Conclusions: In some situations, discrete failure time distributions are more appropriate to model lifetimes than continuous distributions. Very few results for the discrete case have been given in the literature. This paper provides three families of discrete parametric life-time distributions which are quite versatile in fitting ^(Increasing Failure Rate) (IFR), ^(Decreasing Failure Rate) (DFR), and constant failure rate models to either uncensored or right-censored life-test data. The maximum likelihood estimation ^(MLE) of parameters, survival probabilities, and mean lifetimes is investigated, and the MLEs are shown to be easily computed by simple numerical methods. An example is given for each of the models, allowing the comparison of the proposed models. The example illustrates that the discrete models presented here can provide a better fit to discrete data than previously proposed discrete distributions. ^g ^A



1. INTRODUCTION

A great amount of research has been performed for continuous life distributions. However, very little has appeared in the literature for discrete failure models. Discrete failure data arise in several common situations: (i) A device can be monitored only once per time period (an hour, a day, etc.), and the observation taken is the number of time periods successfully completed prior to the failure of the device. (ii) A piece of _____ equipment may operate in cycles, and the experimenter observes the number of cycles successfully completed prior to failure. Many other examples may be cited.

In situations where the observed data values are very large, in thousands of cycles, etc., a continuous distribution can be an adequate model for the discrete random variable. For example, the Birnbaum-Saunders [3] distribution arises in connection with fatigue failure due to bending of metal alloys. However, when the observed values are small, a continuous distribution may not adequately describe a discrete random variable, and an appropriate discrete failure model is desirable.

A few results on discrete life distributions have appeared in the literature. Kalbfleisch & Prentice [5, Ch. 2] briefly discuss discrete failure distributions that may be obtained from well-known continuous distributions such as the exponential or Weibull. Langberg, Leon, Lynch & Proschan [5,6] examine properties of the classes of discrete DFR and DFRA distributions. Salvia & Bollinger [9] consider the properties of discrete hazard functions and analogies with the continuous case. Barlow, Bartholomew, Bremner & Brunk [1] give a nonparametric estimate of an IFR function using isotonic regression

techniques. Their estimate is easily modified for DFR functions and to allow for censoring.

The purpose of this paper is to further examine discrete hazard functions in a parametric setting. Estimation for the discrete hazard functions given by Salvia & Bollinger [9] will be discussed for both uncensored and censored lifetime data in Section 2. In addition, some other parametric discrete failure models will be proposed and estimation for them will be studied in Sections 3 and 4. It should be noted that meaningful discrete parametric models generally present difficult estimation problems and may not be founded on a theoretical basis [5, p. 36]. However, such models are still quite important for discrete failure data.

Notation

MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimator
IFR	Increasing Failure Rate
DFR(A)	Decreasing Failure Rate (Average)
f_k	$pmf\{k\} = \Pr\{X = k\}$
S_k	$Sf\{k\} = \Pr\{X \geq k\}$
h_k	discrete hazard, f_k/S_k
k_1, \dots, k_n	random sample of n observations on a discrete random variable X
$\alpha, \hat{\alpha}$	a parameter and its MLE
F	a cumulative distribution function
$E(X)$	expectation of the random variable X
$L, \ln L$	a likelihood function and its natural logarithm

2. THE MODELS OF SALVIA AND BOLLINGER

Salvia & Bollinger [9] developed some results for discrete failure models analogous to the theory of the continuous case. Some of their results follow.

The discrete hazard rate (or failure rate) is related to the pmf by

$$h_k = f_k / (f_k + f_{k+1} + \dots) \text{ and } f_0 = h_0, f_1 = h_1(1-h_0), \dots,$$

$$f_k = h_k(1-h_0)(1-h_1) \dots (1-h_{k-1}). \text{ Similarly the discrete Sf is}$$

$$S_k = (1-h_0)(1-h_1) \dots (1-h_{k-1}) \text{ for } k = 1, 2, \dots. \text{ The mean life, if it exists,}$$

$$\text{is } E(X) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} S_k = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (1-h_j). \text{ It should be noted that using Fort}$$

[4, p. 32-33], $E(X)$ exists if there exists an $\epsilon > 0$ and an m such that

for $k > m$, $k[h_k/(1-h_k)] > 1 + \epsilon$. If for $k > m$, $k[h_k/(1-h_k)] \leq 1$, then

$E(X)$ does not exist. Some other results analogous to continuous failure models

were also given in [9] for certain situations. For example, for a distribution with

IFR, $h_0 \leq h_1 \leq h_2 \leq \dots$, $S_k \leq (1-h_0)^k$ and $E(X) \leq (1-h_0)/h_0$. These inequalities

are reversed for DFR distributions.

Salvia & Bollinger [9] also gave illustrations of discrete parametric failure models for the constant failure rate, IFR, and DFR cases.

a. Constant Failure Rate. For $h_k = c$, a constant $0 < c \leq 1$ for all $k=0,1,2,\dots$, $f_k = c(1-c)^k$, a geometric distribution which is the discrete analog of the exponential distribution. We will give the MLE of c for the three cases of a complete random sample k_1, \dots, k_n from f_k , a type II censored sample, and a type I censored sample.

For a complete random sample, the log-likelihood is $\ln L(c; k_1, \dots, k_n) = n \ln c + \sum_{i=1}^n k_i \ln(1-c)$, which is uniquely maximized by $\hat{c} = n / (n + \sum_{i=1}^n k_i)$. Hence, the MLE of S_k is $\hat{S}_k = (1-\hat{c})^k$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$.

For a type II censored sample, denote $k_{(1)} = \min\{k_1, \dots, k_n\}$, $k_{(2)}$ = next smallest of $\{k_1, \dots, k_n\}$, ..., $k_{(r)}$ = r th smallest of $\{k_1, \dots, k_n\}$, where some of the k_i 's may be equal. If $r+m$ items fail at or before $k_{(r)}$, $m=0,1,\dots,n-r$, the log-likelihood is

$$\ln L(c; k_1, \dots, k_n) = (r+m) \ln c + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{r+m} k_{(i)} + (n-r-m)(k_{(r)} + 1) \right) \ln(1-c)$$

which is uniquely maximized by

$$\hat{c} = (r+m) / \left[(r+m) + \sum_{i=1}^{r+m} k_{(i)} + (n-r-m)(k_{(r)} + 1) \right]. \quad (2.1)$$

For a type I censored sample, where the life test is terminated after a fixed number of "cycles" or time units T , the log-likelihood function is $\ln L(c; k_1, \dots, k_n) = \sum_{i=1}^r \ln f_{k_{(i)}} + (n-r) \ln S_T$, where r is the observed number of failures by the end of T cycles. The MLE \hat{c} for this case is similar to (2.1) and is omitted. In fact, the expressions in $\ln L$ for arbitrarily right-censored data, which includes type I and type II censoring, have the same general form for this or any of the discrete models which follow.

b. An IFR Distribution. For $h_k = 1 - c/(k+1)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, $0 \leq c \leq 1$,

$f_k = (k-c+1)c^k/(k+1)!$, an IFR distribution.

c. A DFR Distribution. For $h_k = c/(k+1)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, $0 < c \leq 1$,

$f_k = c(1-c)(2-c)\dots(k-c)/(k+1)!$, a DFR distribution.

We have found that these IFR and DFR distributions are not sufficiently flexible to fit a wide variety of settings. For example, for the IFR distribution the MLE $\hat{c} = 1$ if all k_i 's > 0 , regardless of the values of the k_i 's. For the DFR distribution $E(X)$ exists only for $c=1$. Generalizations of these distributions and estimation results are given in Section 4.1.

3. DISCRETE FAILURE MODELS FROM CONTINUOUS DISTRIBUTIONS

Kalbfleisch & Prentice [5, pp. 35-36] indicate that failure time data are sometimes discrete either because of the grouping of continuous data due to

imprecise measurement or because time itself is discrete. They also give discrete distributions based on grouping data from continuous distributions into unit intervals. For example, if we begin with the Weibull distribution $\text{weif}(\beta t; \alpha) = 1 - \exp(-(\beta t)^\alpha)$, $t \geq 0$, then the discrete distribution obtained by setting $f_k = \text{weif}(\beta(k+1); \alpha) - \text{weif}(\beta k; \alpha) = \exp(-\beta k)^\alpha - \exp(-\beta(k+1))^\alpha$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, is a distribution for grouped failure data. If $\alpha = 1$, f_k becomes $f_k = \exp(-\beta k)(1 - \exp(-\beta)) = c(1-c)^k$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, where $c = 1 - \exp(-\beta)$, which is the geometric model (a) of Salvia & Bollinger [9]. If $\alpha < 1$, a discrete DFR distribution is obtained, and if $\alpha > 1$, f_k is an IFR distribution.

More generally, it is easy to show that if a continuous IFR(DFR) distribution is used to generate a discrete distribution f_k , then f_k is also IFR(DFR). However, the class of continuous distributions giving rise to discrete IFR, DFR, or constant failure rate distributions is not restricted to being IFR, DFR, or constant failure rate, respectively. For example, the pdf $g(x) = \beta \exp(-\beta x) + 2 \exp(-\beta(k+\frac{1}{2})) - 2 \exp(-\beta(k+1))$, $k \leq x \leq k + \frac{1}{2}$, and $g(x) = 0$, $k + \frac{1}{2} < x < k+1$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$ (and $g(x) = 0$, $x < 0$) does not have constant failure rate, IFR, nor DFR, yet $f_k = \exp(-\beta k)(1 - \exp(-\beta))$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, which has constant failure rate, as before.

4. SOME PROPOSED DISCRETE PARAMETRIC FAILURE MODELS

We propose some more general discrete failure models than those of Salvia & Bollinger [9]. First, a generalization of their IFR and DFR models which were mentioned in Section 2 is given and maximum likelihood estimation of the parameters is investigated. Then a discrete failure model which can have increasing, decreasing, or constant failure rate according to the values of one of its parameters is presented, and estimation of the parameters is considered.

It should be noted also that some of the well-known distributions, in addition to the geometric distribution, may be useful in modeling discrete life data. For example, it may be easily shown directly, or using the results on pp. 76-77 of Barlow & Proschan [2], that the Poisson distribution is an IFR distribution.

4.1 Generalized Salvia and Bollinger Models

The IFR and DFR models of Salvia & Bollinger [9] given in Section 2 will be generalized by the addition of a second parameter α . When $\alpha=1$ the models reduce to those in Section 2. When $\alpha=0$ the models reduce to the constant failure rate model of Section 2.

The IFR Case (Model 1)

Let $h_k = 1 - c/(\alpha k + 1)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, ($0 \leq c \leq 1$, $0 \leq \alpha$). The pmf is $f_k = (\alpha k + 1 - c)c^k / \prod_{j=0}^k (\alpha j + 1)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, and the Sf is $S_k = c^k / \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (\alpha j + 1)$, $k=1,2,\dots$. As $\alpha \rightarrow \infty$, the model approaches the Bernoulli model with $f_0 = 1 - c$ and $f_1 = c$. As $c \rightarrow 0$, the model approaches the degenerate distribution with $f_0 = 1$. The parameter $c = P_r\{X > 0\}$ and α is a shape parameter. The pmf is nonincreasing in k if $c > \frac{1}{2}$ and $\alpha \leq (c-1)^2/(2c-1)$ or if $c \leq \frac{1}{2}$. Otherwise, the pmf increases and then decreases in k . Figure 1 shows the pmf's for some values of α and c .

We now consider the estimation of the parameters from an observed random sample k_1, \dots, k_n from f_k . The log-likelihood function is

$$\ln L = \sum_{i=1}^n k_i \ln c + \sum_{i=1}^n \ln(\alpha k_i + 1 - c) - \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=0}^{k_i} \ln(\alpha j + 1). \quad (4.1.1)$$

Three cases will be considered.

Case i: α Known. If all $k_1 = 0$, then $\ln L = n \ln(1-c)$, which gives $\hat{c} = 0$. Next, if at least one $k_1 > 0$, from (4.1.1)

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial c} \ln L = \sum_{i=1}^n k_i / c - \sum_{i=1}^n 1 / (\alpha k_i + 1 - c). \quad (4.1.2)$$

Then $\frac{\partial^2}{\partial c^2} \ln L < 0$ for all $0 < c < 1$. It follows from examining the limits of (4.1.2) as $c \rightarrow 0$ and $c \rightarrow 1$ that there is a unique value \hat{c} which maximizes (4.1.1). If all $k_1 > 0$ and $\alpha \leq \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (1/k_i)}{\sum_{i=1}^n k_i}$, then $\hat{c} = 1$. Otherwise, \hat{c} may be approximated by solving $\frac{\partial}{\partial c} \ln L = 0$ for c using the Newton-Raphson procedure.

Case ii: c Known. If all k_1 's = 0, then (4.1.1) does not involve α . Hence, $\hat{\alpha}$ is arbitrary. If at least one $k_1 > 0$, then $\frac{\partial}{\partial \alpha} \ln L = 0$ may or may not have a solution for α .

Case iii: Both α and c Unknown. If all k_1 's = 0, then $\hat{c} = 0$ and $\hat{\alpha}$ is arbitrary. Next, if n_0 k_1 's = 0 and the remaining k_1 's = 1, then $\hat{c} = (n - n_0)/n$ and $\hat{\alpha} = +\infty$. Finally, if at least one $k_1 > 1$, it is difficult, if not impossible to show that unique MLE's always exist. However, it is possible to find the unique value of c which maximizes (4.1.1) for fixed α . A line search of the variable α can then be performed to obtain an approximate maximum for (4.1.1).

For the cases of type I and type II censoring, the MLE's for this model are obtained in the same manner. For type I censoring after T cycles, the log-likelihood function is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = & \ln(c) [(n-r) + \sum_{i=1}^r k_{(i)}] + \sum_{i=1}^r \ln [\alpha k_{(i)} + 1 - c] \\ & - \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=0}^{k_{(i)}} \ln(\alpha j + 1) - (n-r) \sum_{j=0}^{T-1} \ln(\alpha j + 1). \end{aligned} \quad (4.1.3)$$

For type II censoring with $r+m$ failures at or before $k_{(r)}$, $m=0,1,\dots,n-r$, the log-likelihood is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = & \ln(c) [(n-m-r)(k_{(r)}+1) + \sum_{i=1}^{m+r} k_{(i)}] + \sum_{i=1}^{m+r} \ln(\alpha k_{(i)}+1-c) \\ & - \sum_{i=1}^{m+r} \sum_{j=0}^{k_{(i)}} \ln(j\alpha+1) - (n-m-r) \sum_{j=0}^{k_{(r)}} \ln(j\alpha+1). \end{aligned} \quad (4.1.4)$$

The derivatives of (4.1.3) and (4.1.4) have the same behavior as those of (4.1.1), so the MLE's may be obtained numerically as described for uncensored data.

The mean lifetime for this model from the formula in Section 2 is

$$E(X) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} c^k / \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (j\alpha+1) \text{ which may be easily calculated to}$$

any desired degree of accuracy by summing an appropriate number of terms of the series. An estimate of $E(X)$ is found by replacing α and c by $\hat{\alpha}$ and \hat{c} .

The DFR Case (Model 2)

Let $h_k = c/(\alpha k+1)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, ($0 < c \leq 1$, $0 \leq \alpha$). The pmf is $f_0 = c$ and

$$f_k = c \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (j\alpha+1-c) / \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (j\alpha+1), \quad k=1,2,\dots,$$

and the Sf is $S_k = \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (j\alpha+1-c)/(j\alpha+1)$, where $\prod_{j=0}^{-1} \equiv 1$. As $c \rightarrow 1$, the model approaches the degenerate distribution with $f_0 = 1$. The parameter $c = \Pr\{X=0\}$ and α is a shape parameter. The pmf is decreasing in k for all α and c . Figure 2 shows the pmf's for various choices of α and c .

We now consider the estimation of the parameters from an observed random sample k_1, \dots, k_n from f_k . The log-likelihood function is

$$\ln L = n \ln c + \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=0}^{k_i-1} \ln(j\alpha+1-c) - \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=0}^{k_i-1} \ln(j\alpha+1), \quad (4.1.5)$$

where $\sum_{j=0}^{-1} \equiv 0$.

The results for maximizing (4.1.5) are analogous to the IFR case. If α is known, there is a unique $0 < \hat{c}_\alpha \leq 1$ which maximizes (4.1.5). This \hat{c}_α can be approximated by the Newton-Raphson procedure. If c is known, then $\frac{\partial}{\partial \alpha} \ln L = 0$ may or may not have a solution. If both α and c are unknown, then an approximate maximum for (4.1.5) is found by performing a line search on α with $c = \hat{c}_\alpha$.

For the cases of type I and type-II censoring the MLE's are obtained in the same manner. For type I censoring after T cycles, the log-likelihood function is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = r \ln c + \sum_{i=1}^r \left[\sum_{j=0}^{k(i)-1} \ln(j\alpha+1-c) - \sum_{j=0}^{k(i)} \ln(j\alpha+1) \right] \\ + (n-r) \sum_{j=0}^{T-1} \ln[(\alpha j+1-c)/(\alpha j+1)]. \end{aligned} \quad (4.1.6)$$

For type II censoring with $r+m$ failures at or before $k_{(r)}$, $m=0,1,\dots,n-r$, the log-likelihood is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = (m+r) \ln c + \sum_{i=1}^{m+r} \left[\sum_{j=0}^{k(i)-1} \ln(j\alpha+1-c) - \sum_{j=0}^{k(i)} \ln(j\alpha+1) \right] \\ + (n-m-r) \sum_{j=0}^{k(r)} \ln[(\alpha j+1-c) / (\alpha j+1)]. \end{aligned} \quad (4.1.7)$$

The MLEs may be obtained numerically as for uncensored data.

Using the results in Section 2, $E(X)$ exists if $c=1$ or $1 > c > \alpha$ and does not exist if $c \leq \alpha$ and $c \neq 1$. If $c > \alpha$, then the mean lifetime may be easily approximated by summing an appropriate number of terms of

$$E(X) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \prod_{j=0}^{k-1} (\alpha j+1-c) / (\alpha j+1).$$

An estimate of $E(X)$ is found by replacing α and c by $\hat{\alpha}$ and \hat{c} .

4.2 A Discrete "Weibull Hazard" Model (Model 3)

Let $h_k = 1 - \exp(-c(k+1)^\alpha)$, $k=0,1,2,\dots$, ($c > 0$, $-\infty < \alpha < \infty$). Since this h_k is similar to the Weibull Cdf, we will call this the discrete Weibull hazard model, or Model 3. Thus the pmf is

$$f_k = (1 - \exp(-c(k+1)^\alpha)) \prod_{i=1}^k \exp(-ci^\alpha) \\ = \exp(-c \sum_{i=1}^k i^\alpha) (1 - \exp(-c(k+1)^\alpha)), \quad k=0,1,2,\dots,$$

and the Sf is $S_k = \exp(-c \sum_{i=1}^k i^\alpha)$, $k=1,2,\dots$, where $\sum_{i=1}^0 \equiv 0$.

Note that for $\alpha=0$, this model reduces to the constant failure rate model of Section 2. For $\alpha > 0$, the distribution has IFR, and for $\alpha < 0$, it has DFR. Thus, this discrete model is quite flexible with respect to choice of failure rate, analogous to the Weibull distribution in the continuous case. The parameter α is essentially a shape parameter and c is a "spread" parameter. For small values of c , the probability is spread out in the tail of the distribution, whereas for large c , most of the probability is at $k=0$. For example, for $c=5$, $f_0 = 0.9933$. For $\alpha < 0$, the pmf is always decreasing in k . For $\alpha > 0$, the pmf is either decreasing or first increasing and then decreasing in k . In particular, for small c , the largest f_k is at large values of k . For example, for $\alpha = 0.5$, $c = .01$, the largest value of f_k is at $k=13$. Figure 3 shows the pmf's for some values of α and c . It appears that for various values of $c > 0$, α in the range $-1 \leq \alpha \leq 1$ is sufficient to describe many IFR, DFR, or constant failure rate discrete distributions.

We now consider the estimation of the parameters from an observed random sample k_1, \dots, k_n from f_k . The log-likelihood function is

$$\ln L = \sum_{i=1}^n \ln[1 - \exp(-c(k_i+1)^\alpha)] - c \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^{k_i} j^\alpha. \quad (4.2.1)$$

Three cases will be considered.

Case i: α Known. If at least one $k_1 > 0$, from (4.2.1)

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial c} \ln L = \sum_{i=1}^n (k_i + 1)^\alpha / [\exp(c(k_i + 1)^\alpha) - 1] - \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^{k_i} j^\alpha. \quad (4.2.2)$$

Then, $\frac{\partial^2}{\partial c^2} \ln L < 0$ for all $c > 0$, and as $c \rightarrow 0$, (4.2.2) approaches $+\infty$, whereas as $c \rightarrow \infty$, (4.2.2) approaches a negative constant. Hence, there is a unique MLE for c . This MLE can be found by solving $\frac{\partial}{\partial c} \ln L = 0$ numerically using Newton-Raphson iteration.

If $k_1 = 0$ for all $i=1, \dots, n$, then $\ln L$ does not involve α and is an increasing function of c . Hence, $\hat{c} = +\infty$ and $\hat{\alpha}$ is arbitrary. These estimates correspond to $\hat{f}_0 = 1$ and $\hat{f}_k = 0$, $k > 0$.

Case ii: c Known. For any fixed value of c , it can be shown that there exists at least one solution to $\frac{\partial}{\partial \alpha} \ln L = 0$ for α if at least one $k_1 > 1$. The solution may not be unique. If all $k_1 = 0$, $\ln L$ does not involve α , so $\hat{\alpha}$ is arbitrary. Finally, if all k_1 's = 1 or some k_1 's = 0 and the remaining k_1 's = 1, then there may be no finite value for $\hat{\alpha}$.

Case iii: Both α and c Unknown. If at least one $k_1 > 0$, it is difficult, if not impossible, to show that unique MLEs always exist. However, it is possible to find the unique values of c which maximize (4.2.1) for fixed values of α using the Newton-Raphson procedure for solving $\frac{\partial}{\partial c} \ln L = 0$. A line search on the variable α can then be performed to obtain an approximate maximum for (4.2.1).

For the cases of type I and type II censoring, the MLEs for this failure model are obtained in the same manner as just described. For type I censoring after T cycles, the log-likelihood function is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = & \sum_{i=1}^r \ln[1 - \exp(-c)(k_{(i)} + 1)^\alpha] - c \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^{k_{(i)}} j^\alpha \\ & - c(n-r) \sum_{j=1}^T j^\alpha. \end{aligned} \quad (4.2.3)$$

For type II censoring with $r+m$ failures at or before $k_{(r)}$, $m=0,1,\dots,n-r$, the log-likelihood is

$$\begin{aligned} \ln L = & \sum_{i=1}^{r+m} \ln[1 - \exp(-c(k_{(i)} + 1)^\alpha)] - c \sum_{i=1}^{r+m} \sum_{j=1}^{k_{(i)}} j^\alpha \\ & - c(n-r-m) \sum_{j=1}^{k_{(r)}+1} j^\alpha. \end{aligned} \quad (4.2.4)$$

The derivatives of (4.2.3) and (4.2.4) have the same behavior as those of (4.2.1), so the MLEs may be obtained numerically as described for uncensored data.

The mean lifetime for this model is $E(X) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \exp(-c \sum_{j=1}^k j^\alpha)$. By the results referenced in Section 2, $E(X)$ exists for all $c > 0$ and $\alpha > -1$ and does not exist when $\alpha < -1$ for any value of $c > 0$. For $\alpha = -1$, $E(X)$ exists when $c > 1$ but does not exist for $c \leq 1$. When $E(X)$ exists, it may be easily obtained to any desired degree of accuracy by summing an appropriate number of terms in the series. An estimate of $E(X)$ can be found by using $\hat{\alpha}$ and \hat{c} . For $\alpha < 0$ (DFR), a lower bound for $E(X)$ is $\exp(-c)/[1 - \exp(-c)]$, which can be estimated by replacing c with \hat{c} . For $\alpha > 0$ (IFR), this quantity is an upper bound for $E(X)$.

5. EXAMPLES

Nelson [8] reported times to breakdown in minutes of an insulating fluid subjected to various test voltages. We took as an example the failure times at 36 kV and reduced each observation to the next lowest integer, which corresponds to observing the life test once per minute and recording the lifetime as "k" if the breakdown occurred in time interval $[k, k+1)$. Nelson [8] assumed

an underlying Weibull distribution for the continuous failure times. As examples, we will consider estimation from this data for the "discrete Weibull" model of Section 3, Models 2 and 3 of Section 4, and the nonparametric DFR model of Barlow, Bartholomew, Bremner, and Brunk [1].

The data that we use, as adapted from Nelson [8] for 36kV, are: 0,0,0,0,1,1,2,2,2,2,3,3,5,13,25 (minutes before failure). The computed MLEs of parameters, pmfs, Sfs, discrete hazards, and mean lifetimes for the various models are shown for comparison in Table 1. A hazard plot of these 15 observations indicated that the life distribution is DFR. This is supported by the MLE of α in the "discrete Weibull hazard" model (Model 3) which was $\hat{\alpha} \approx -.391$.

It can be seen from Table 1 that the nonparametric DFR model yields the largest value for $\ln L$. This is to be expected since maximization of $\ln L$ is done over all DFR distributions (including the other models in Table 1). The nonparametric model has two drawbacks, particularly when the number of failures is small. First, the estimate of the hazard function, \hat{h}_k , decreases at k only if there is an observed failure at k . Secondly, for k larger than the largest failure time, \hat{h}_k is not uniquely defined. For the purposes of Table 1 $\hat{h}_k \equiv \hat{h}_{25}$ for $k > 25$.

The three parametric models yield similar estimates of the failure distribution. We make the following distinctions among the models. In terms of $\ln L$, Model 2 performs the best for this data. Calculation of the estimators is more complicated for the discrete Weibull model than for Models 2 and 3. Model 3 and the discrete Weibull model are more flexible than Model 2 since they allow both IFR and DFR distributions. These proposed models provide a large class of distributions for fitting discrete failure data.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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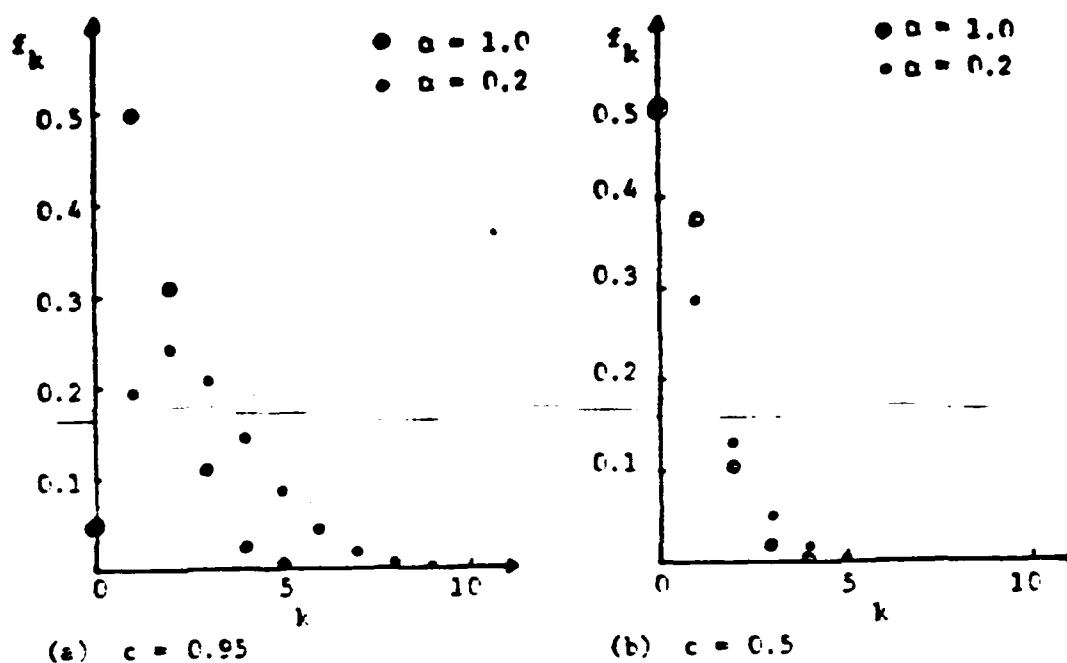


Figure 1: Model 1.

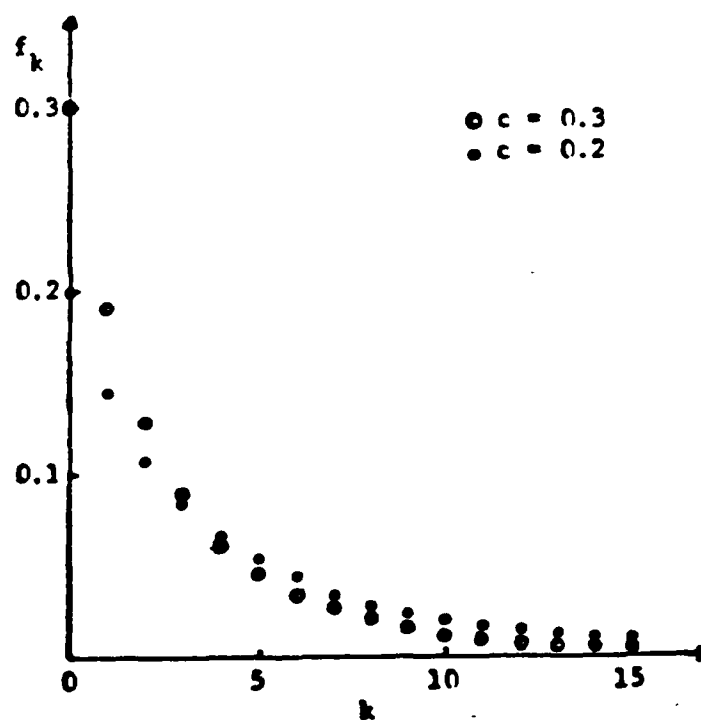
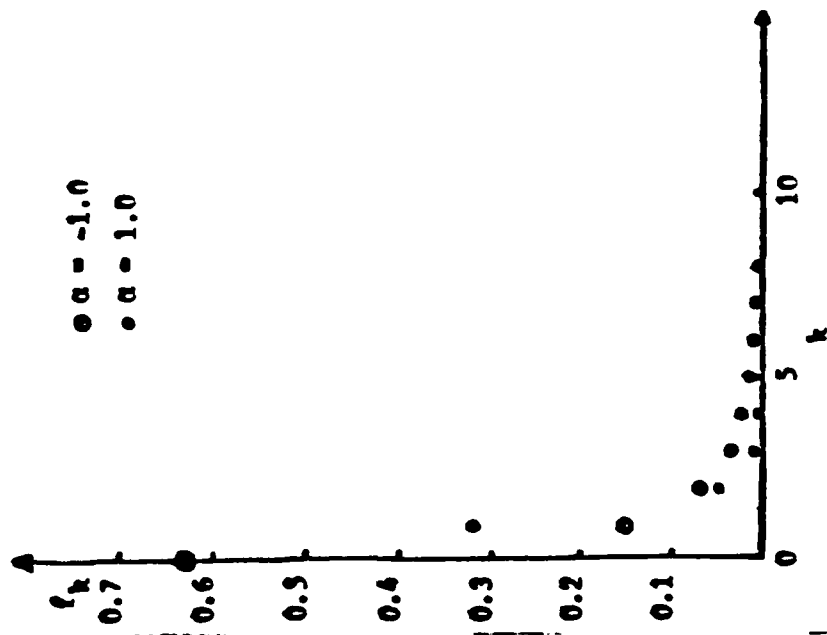
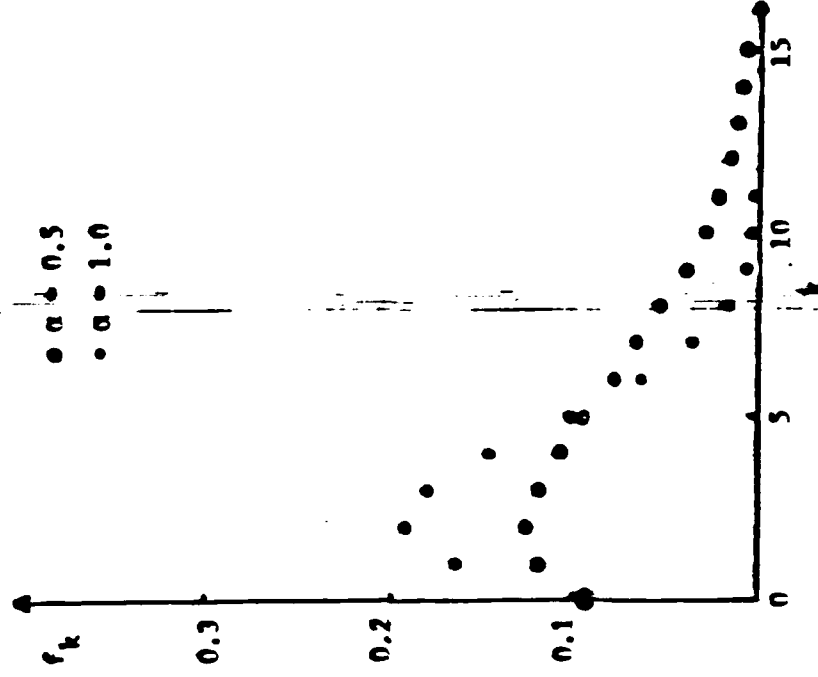


Figure 2: Model 2 with $\alpha = 0.1$.



(a) $c = 1.0$



(b) $c = 0.1$

Figure 3: Model 3 (Discrete Weibull Hazard Distribution).

TABLE 1

Estimated Failure Models

k	Empirical			Discrete Weibull			Model 2			Model 3			Nonparametric		
	\hat{f}_k	\hat{f}_k	\hat{f}_k	\hat{h}_k	\hat{h}_k	\hat{s}_k	\hat{f}_k	\hat{h}_k	\hat{s}_k	\hat{f}_k	\hat{h}_k	\hat{s}_k	\hat{f}_k	\hat{h}_k	\hat{s}_k
0	.2667	.3133	.3133	.313	.313	1.000	.2982	.298	1.000	.3130	.313	1.000	.3000	.300	1.000
1	.1333	.1566	.1566	.228	.228	.687	.1858	.265	.702	.1710	.249	.687	.2100	.300	.700
2	.2667	.1079	.1079	.204	.204	.530	.1228	.238	.516	.1118	.217	.516	.1470	.300	.490
3	.1333	.0798	.0798	.189	.189	.422	.0850	.216	.393	.0793	.196	.404	.1029	.300	.343
4	.0000	.0612	.0612	.179	.179	.342	.0610	.198	.308	.0589	.181	.325	.0400	.167	.240
5	.0667	.0481	.0481	.171	.171	.281	.0451	.183	.247	.0452	.170	.266	.0333	.167	.200
6	.0000	.0384	.0384	.165	.165	.233	.0342	.169	.202	.0355	.161	.221	.0119	.071	.167
7	.0000	.0311	.0311	.160	.160	.195	.0265	.158	.168	.0284	.153	.185	.0111	.071	.155
8	.0000	.0254	.0254	.155	.155	.164	.0209	.148	.141	.0231	.147	.157	.0103	.071	.144
9	.0000	.0209	.0209	.151	.151	.138	.0168	.139	.120	.0189	.142	.134	.0095	.071	.134
11	.0000	.0145	.0145	.145	.145	.100	.0112	.125	.090	.0131	.132	.099	.0082	.071	.115
13	.0667	.0103	.0103	.140	.140	.073	.0078	.113	.069	.0939	.125	.075	.0071	.071	.099
15	.0000	.0074	.0074	.135	.135	.054	.0057	.103	.055	.0069	.119	.058	.0061	.071	.086
20	.0000	.0034	.0034	.127	.127	.027	.0028	.084	.033	.0034	.108	.031	.0042	.071	.059
25	.0667	.0017	.0017	.121	.121	.014	.0016	.072	.022	.0018	.100	.018	.0029	.071	.041
35	.0000	.0004	.0004	.112	.112	.004	.0006	.055	.012	.0006	.088	.007	.0014	.071	.019
50	.0000	.0001	.0001	.103	.103	.001	.0002	.041	.006	.0001	.078	.002	.0005	.071	.006

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